

## **Tuesday 18 January 2022 – Primary**

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to advise you of the changes to Government guidance which come into place from Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January.

### **Students and staff can end self-isolation period after 5 full days**

Under the new rules, students who are self-isolating with COVID-19 can now end their isolation period after 5 full days.

To do so they must test negative using Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests on both day 5 and day 6. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 5 and the second must be taken the following day. In order to return to school, your child must also not have a temperature.

Those who are still positive on their LFD tests must stay in isolation until they have had 2 consecutive negative tests taken on separate days or until they have completed 10 full days of self-isolation, whichever is earliest.

All LFD test results should be reported online at: [Report a COVID-19 rapid lateral flow test result - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/report-a-covid-19-rapid-lateral-flow-test-result).

### **Confirmatory PCR tests temporarily suspended**

The Government guidance for those who have a positive LFD test result has also changed. If your child receives a positive LFD test result, they are no longer required to take a confirmatory PCR test. They must still self-isolate at home.

This is a temporary measure while COVID-19 rates remain high across the UK. You should also report positive LFD test results for your online.

## **Close contacts of confirmed cases of Coronavirus**

Recently the Government changed the rules regarding anyone identified as a close contact of a confirmed, positive Coronavirus case. These rules apply to close contacts of both the Delta and Omicron variants.

Any child (aged between five and 18 years and six months) who is identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a COVID-19 case does not need to self-isolate.

Instead, they should continue to attend their school, but are strongly encouraged to take daily LFD tests for seven days. If your child tests positive on an LFD test, they should isolate immediately.

Children under 5 years are exempt from self-isolation and do not need to take part in daily testing of close contacts.

## **Children with Coronavirus symptoms**

If your child has [COVID-19 symptoms](#) it remains the case that they should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. They should take a PCR test as soon as possible. If this PCR test result is positive, they must continue to self-isolate. You can book a PCR test for your child online: [PCR Test Booking](#).

## **Asymptomatic testing of children**

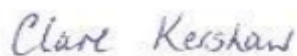
There is no change to the approach to asymptomatic testing. We continue to strongly encourage all staff, students (primary, secondary and further education students) and all households to take part in regular testing if they are not showing symptoms. This will help to reduce the risk of the virus unknowingly entering the school community. Your school has been supporting your child to participate in twice weekly testing and we continue to encourage this approach and to support schools with their communication to you about this process.

You can access free LFD tests in a number of ways, including at the local LFD site in your district, by collecting a home LFD kit from a test site, or by ordering online. More information can be found here: [Regular Rapid Lateral Flow Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Tests](#).

We appreciate that the changes in guidance can cause anxiety for some but it is important that the education of our children is prioritised this academic year. The likelihood of serious illness in children is extremely low and after many months of serious disruption, the DfE and the Local Authority continue to be committed to ensuring that all children and young people in Essex have every opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for all for the support that you continue to provide for your child's school at this challenging time.

With best wishes



Clare Kershaw  
Director of Education  
Essex County Council



Mike Gogarty  
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing  
Essex County Council